



# The County Commuter

## Carpools Travel Free—91 Express Lanes

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The Orange County Transportation Authority has voted to allow carpools of three or more to travel for free on the 91 Express Lanes, except for during the peak hours of 4 p.m. through 6 p.m. on the eastbound lanes Monday through Friday.

The ride free policy also applies to motorists with disabled-person license plates, disabled veterans, zero-emission vehicles and motorcycles.

All cars will still need to use transponders on the Express Lanes, which stretches 10 miles along the median of the Riverside (91) Freeway. For more information, go to the OCTA web site at [www.octa.net](http://www.octa.net).

## Annual Transportation Survey

The County will again be surveying all employees this fall as part of our Transportation Program. Last year we instituted a new online survey as a pilot project for some departments/agencies. The good news is that it was so successful, we will be conducting the survey this year completely paperless! Look for your online survey in late September.

## State Of The Air

Twenty-eight California counties – including **Orange County** - received a flunking grade of "F" in the American Lung Association's 2003 State of the Air Report. Smog levels continue to threaten the health of more than 33 million Californians, according to the ALA, up nearly 4 million compared to last year's report. For the fourth year in a row, the top four most smog choked areas were in California and included Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, Fresno, Bakersfield and the Visalia/Tulare/Porterville area. One way to help cut down on pollution is to carpool. If you need a carpool partner, please log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/rideshare), and click on **Carpool Connection** for a list of ready-to-go carpoolers. For up-to-the-day smog information, click onto [www.aqmd.gov](http://www.aqmd.gov).

### Points of interest:

- Catch a Metrolink train this summer to head for the beach
- Driving solo to work means spending an average of 27 hours stuck in traffic each year
- If you currently ride-share with one other person, try and recruit a third person, even once in a while!

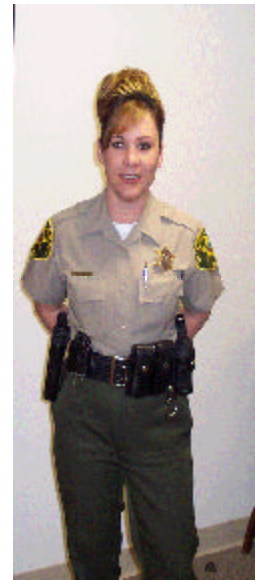
## Metrolink Ticket Winner

Each quarter, as part of the "Get Into Training" program, we award a \$100 transit voucher to one lucky Metrolink rider who has submitted the drawing application after receiving the current rider or new rider commuter rail startup subsidy.

*"A winner is chosen every quarter."*

By the way, if you have received a current rider or new rider subsidy in past years, you may now be eligible again if it has been a year since you last received the subsidy. Simply submit a current rider application along with proof that you have been riding Metrolink for at least six months and you will get another \$100 voucher good toward the purchase of your next Metrolink ticket or pass. You can submit for a voucher once every twelve months – but it is not retroactive.

Log onto the Commuter Assistance Program web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on the **Incentive Programs** button to print a copy of the current rider or new rider application. You can also pick up an application from one of the Commuter Information Display racks located at 30 worksites throughout the County, or call the Message Center at 714/834-4068 for more information.



**Kimberly Samra,**  
Sheriff-Coroner Dept.

You might be a lucky winner like **Kimberly Samra**, this quarter's winner. Congratulations, and thanks for riding the train!

## Save Gas, Burn Calories—Bike To Work



There are lots of ways to "rideshare" to work. Some involve getting into a carpool, taking public transit or forming a vanpool. But consider this — summertime is the perfect season to think about biking to work. The daylight hours are the longest, ensuring you won't be pedaling home in the dark, and most people feel just a little more incentive to get in shape during the summer months. So, you're ready to bike to work, but what's the best way to get there?

Now you can go to a new website – [www.bikemetro.com](http://www.bikemetro.com) — and get instant street-by-street cycling directions. The site, developed with funds from the Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee – gives

bike-friendly routes based on your start and end locations within the South Coast Basin. BikeMetro will provide a customized route complete with map. The route takes into account your skill level, hills in the area, as well as bike paths and bike lanes.

There is also an online calculator to see how many calories you will burn and how much air pollution you *won't* create by leaving your car at home. You'll also find advice on bike safety, bike lockers and storage, equipment and maintenance, Park-and-Ride lots, shower facilities and more.

Bike maps are also available at the commuter information display racks and on our web site.

## Commuter Club News

The "Healthy Dining in Orange County" guide containing discount coupons, recipes and hints on eating healthy at local participating restaurants is receiving rave reviews from Commuter Club members. Here's what a few members from the County Assessor's Office had to say:

"I plan on taking full advantage of the coupons!" stated Mary Ann Love. Linda Miller mentioned that she "really likes the recipes," and Raylina Avila exclaimed, "I find the book very interesting, and it's not something to be thrown away."

*"Healthy Dining in  
Orange County"  
guide is well  
received.*

If you are a current Commuter Club member, tell us what you think of the new "Healthy Dining in Orange County" guide. We'll put your name into a drawing to win a \$25 gift certificate to Islands Fine Burgers and Drinks Restaurant. Send your e-mail comments to [rideshare@ocgov.com](mailto:rideshare@ocgov.com) — we'll announce the lucky winner in the next issue of the County Commuter newsletter.

If you are currently ridesharing to work, and are not receiving these great benefits, simply log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), click on **Incentive Programs** and print out a copy of the Commuter Club application. You can also pick up an application from one of the Commuter Information Display racks located at 30 worksites throughout the County, or you can call the Message Center at 714/834-4068 for more information.

We'd like to thank Wingnuts in Costa Mesa and Islands Fine Burgers and Drinks for providing additional discounts and gift certificates for our rideshare participants. These and other new discount coupons will be sent to all new and renewing Commuter Club members. It's not too late to start ridesharing and send in your application!



## Carpool Classifieds

We are continually updating the list of County of Orange employees who would like to find a carpool partner to help make their commutes easier and help share the costs of driving. If you are interested in finding a carpool partner, please log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on **Carpool Connection** for a list of carpool-ready commuters.

If you would like to be added to the online Carpool Classifieds list, click on **Request For Information** and print an application form to submit to us. You'll also find tips on forming a carpool, a map showing carpool lanes and information about the County Guaranteed Return Trip program for rideshare participants.

We are interested in hearing from those of you who have found a carpool match. Send us a note.





*"Commute options from  
A to B... and back"*

## COMMUTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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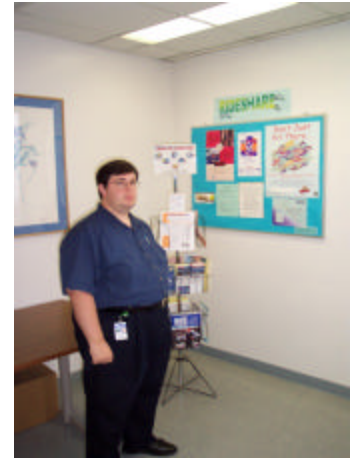
The County Commuter Newsletter is published by the Commuter Assistance Program Office managed by the CEO/Human Resources. Our mission is to distribute commuter information to all County of Orange employees so that they can make informed decisions about how they travel to work. For more information about the Commuter Assistance Program, please go to web site.

## Coordinator Corner

Silviu Ardeleanu is a medical eligibility supervisor in the **Social Services Agency** and is the new on-site rideshare coordinator at the county's La Palma site.

Silviu is a proud Commuter Club member who carpools every day three miles to work with his wife.

Silviu hopes to keep the 400 employees at the site informed and up-to-date about the benefits of ridesharing. He helps to maintain and stock the Commuter Information Display Rack and bulletin board located in the second floor lunch room that contains train schedule, bus books and more. Thanks again for your efforts!



Silviu Ardeleanu, Social Services

## Tax Incentives For Hybrids

Hybrid vehicles, which combine electric and gasoline engine technology, are eligible for a clean fuel tax deduction. A \$2,000 incentive is being offered to owners who purchased their new hybrid car in 2002. If you bought your hybrid before then, you can file an amended tax return to get the \$2,000 deduction. Cars using hybrid technology consume gasoline super efficiently, drastically reducing the amount of harmful pollution going into the air. And, with gasoline prices generally higher, owners of hybrid vehicles are reporting they are getting more than 600 miles to a tank of gas! For more information, go to [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov) or [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Who can drive in the carpool lanes on freeways?***

The High Occupancy Vehicle lane (called carpool or diamond lane) must carry the minimum number of people posted at the entrance signs. The carpool lanes are designed to carry more people, rather than more cars. That usually means at least two people, and in some cases three people, need to ride in the car. Some carpool lanes are in operation only during certain hours, which are posted. For more information, click onto [www.ca.gov/state](http://www.ca.gov/state) and click onto California Transportation Facts.

### ***Why do gas prices differ so much from one location to another?***

Several factors influence the price of gas from one area to another and even from one station to another. These include competition, transportation costs, volume of fuel sold, customer payment options, advertising and state and local taxes. Generally, the price of gas is based on the cost to make it, the cost to sell it and taxes. Some stations sell a higher volume of fuel and can lower their prices slightly. Other stations have lower prices because they do not take credit cards. And, taxes on gasoline vary, depending on the city and county in which you live. On average, the sales tax adds 9 to 12 cents onto every gallon of gas. Just another reason to rideshare!